

Title: Interview with Fay McCready

Date: April 17, 2025

Location: Crisfield Public Library

Interviewer(s): Paige Cohen and Mia Butta

Interviewee: Fay McCready

Introduction: Fay McCready talks about moving to Crisfield in 2011 as a retired teacher who had taught in big cities before moving to the quiet town of Crisfield. She talks about her experiences through Hurricane Sandy and what it was like raising her brothers' children in an area that is 'biased' towards outsiders.

[Transcription begins]

Paige Cohen (Cohen): My name is Paige Cohen. Would you like to introduce yourself?

Fay McCready (McCready): And I'm Fay McCready.

Mia Butta (Butta): And I'm Mia Butta.

Cohen: And it is Thursday, April 17th, and we are at the Crisfield, Crisfield Library.

Butta: So our first question that we have for you is how long have you lived in the Crisfield area and if you like moved here, when did you move here?

McCready: Okay, I moved here in 2011 after I retired from Philadelphia. I'm a former school teacher, I taught in Philly. I taught grade- from grades preschool through middle school and pre-college. So I have a wealth of educational experience. However, when I retired, I had bought a home here in 2003 from one of my relatives, and I just wanted the quiet kind of seashore life, you know, after the busyness and whatever of the city. I just wanted to kind of like just get away a bit, you know, even though I had been here previously when I was a little girl, my brothers, and I came here with one of my aunts. And we stayed here from maybe first, second to fourth grade maybe, you know, with family members, though, so it was a loving experience. But at that time, that's the first time I ever saw what I would call the water and the little flood, because you didn't get that in the city, you know? Not, not to that extent. We had, like, little water plugs that you could step on the side of the pavement or whatever. But here, I've never seen the water come up like that, like to a certain level of the homes, you know, and I mean like the first level of the home. But this was back in the day. But recently, just visiting some of my family members,

sometimes down here it's so flooded, you can't come any further than McDonald's. I mean, your car, you would have to stop there. Definitely at one of the gas stations.

Butta: So other than the family connections that you had here and wanting to have a quieter life, are those the only reasons why you decided to move or were there any other reasons?

McCready: I wanted the quietness and the serenity of being in this area and also coming back and- and just sharing with family, because most of my family is here, in this area.

Cohen: Do you have children?

McCready: No.

Cohen: No? Okay.

McCready: I raised two, but I didn't have two of my own, but I have two. I raised my brother's two kids.

Butta: And did you, so you didn't raise them here in Crisfield?

McCready: Yes, half here and half in Philadelphia.

Butta: So what was it like raising those children here?

McCready: I felt the pace was a little slower. To keep it bluntly, I felt there was a whole lot of bias and like prejudice and subtle racism that they think you don't pay attention to, I saw. Because as soon as my nephew came, they wanted to put him back a grade, and I felt, why? I mean, I had an attitude immediately about it, but my mom, a little more docile than I am, you know, she accepted it. But I just didn't realize when he came here from Philadelphia, where we have a little bit of all the state of the art. I'm not bragging, but I mean, there's not too much we can't get our hands on before it fluctuates down here and I didn't know why they just put him back a grade. You know, I mean and that still bothers me till today even though now he's like 30 years old, but it still bothers me because I take it as a bias. It's like who else have you done this to that comes from maybe New York or New Jersey? I'm sure you don't do that to everyone.

Cohen: So they're behind the times, is what you're saying?

McCready: I'm not going to say behind the times, but I mean... [pauses]. Well, they could step it up a little bit, I mean, do something, and speak up more, and gather together more. It's like some of them are just so hushed and don't seem to know how to just come together. And the ones that come together, it's like a small core group that would speak up or say something, which is me, myself. And if I'm by myself to speak up, that's what I would do. I don't care who agrees or doesn't, and that's whatever political party they're in. Sometimes it's not about the political party.

It's about you as a person and a human being, and you treating people how you want to be treated. That's how I basically see it. And here you see a whole lot of subtle, subtle racism, or let me keep it nice, biases on a daily basis.

Cohen: And you can speak your mind freely, for real.

McCready: Yes.

Butta: Now do those children that you raised, did they, do they still live here-.

McCready: No.

Butta: Or did they end up moving?

McCready: They moved, one is in North Carolina teaching and the other one's in Chester teaching special ed students. So, they did well. I didn't ask them to go into teaching though. I wanted them to just do what they wanted to do from their heart. It's not good to just throw things on children, you know. But I just left it like an open pier for them to, you know, venture out on their own and do what they needed to do, but for some reason they chose teaching. They're doing well.

Cohen: What were your kids' experiences, I mean, other than being told that they should stay back a grade, what were their experiences growing up in Crisfield?

McCready: I know every now and then, you get these little small groups, like families, depending on your last name, that puts you either in a upper, lower, middle-class level. And then, I have to admit, even though I didn't know exactly at the time, they have little affiliate [groups]. Whether, I'm supposed to say that or not, but they have little [groups]. And some of the kids don't come out and tell you, but you can see it's something that's beyond their eyes, that they don't want to share. And which, to me, fits under bullying. It's been small little assaults, but I guess families handle them on their own. But thank God we didn't stay long, long because we left later. Because when my mom passed away in '93, I took my nephew back with me. So the rest of his education was in Philadelphia. But we were always back and forth like the holidays, Memorial Day, 4th of July, any family events, you know, Christmas gatherings. Just like the majority of families, you know, do come together.

Butta: So speaking more of those like family events that you said, what are some of your most like cherished memories being in Crisfield?

McCready: They have something called a Crab Derby every year and other little festivals. They even have a- a cruise every now and then right here at this building here. They have a cruise and it's usually a nice event. And, I like the- I call it my little beach back there, but I know it's not mine. They have a little cozy beach back there. Have y'all seen it? Okay, go that way. But, and

that's nice, but basically family, just getting back together with family, you know, that was my main theme, you know.

Cohen: It's really wonderful. Now, how do you entertain yourself in Crisfield?

McCready: Me? I do whatever I want to do being retired. Some days I get up, I just walk my dogs. Some days, like I said, I may go to the beach. I exercise. I go out and eat. I visit former college friends. Just a little bit of whatever I feel like doing. I'm a say my life is about me now. So whatever I feel like doing. Sometimes it's just a walk. Then sometimes I just get up and pitter-patter around the house and fix a corner here or something there and right in the middle of it, I'll leave that project alone and go walking or go out or meet some cousins and we go out for the day. You know-

Butta: Would you say that-

McCready: - so little things.

Butta: Being by the water that- that keeps you here, or like that kind of influences the activities that you do, like could you imagine yourself not being by the water and doing different activities, or does it not make any difference?

McCready: Yeah, I can imagine not being by the water, but the only way I see not being by the water is when the flood comes, and you're inconvenienced. But when it's a controlled environment, like, you know, out there by the beach, that's different. But I'm talking about when it rains and when you step out, it's like a whole puddle, or- or they may have to, the kids can't go to school for a few hours until a tide subsides a bit, you know. Which may be a couple hours. And then sometimes, when I'm at my niece's house, because my home is up this way, hers is down that way, on 4th Street. And some days, once it rains or that tide comes up, you can't go out your front or your back door. I mean, you're really wading through the water, but after a while I guess you get used to it, like I'm no longer afraid of it, but when the Sandy storm came I was actually afraid.

Butta: Because you had only been here for, you said you moved here in 2011?

McCready: Yes, actually moved here. I was coming every year and doing various holidays with the family, but when I retired, I came here to stay in 2011. And the storm came, I think, either the end of September or that October. It was somewhere around that. I wrote it somewhere in my journal. But to me, I was actually afraid. I'd never seen the water come up like that. And then you had the servicemen, actually Army, coming in big boats trying to get people from their homes, whoever wanted to go, and at that particular time I just happened to be visiting my aunt and I'd never seen the water come up like that. I mean, it came, came as far as your car window, the door. So most of us had to get new cars and you couldn't come out for a while. I mean, it- all I

said to myself when I actually saw the actual reality of the water is, "I didn't come here to die." That's what I said to myself, because it- it frightened me because water was, let's take this as far as that line is, that was in some people's homes, that right there. That was in people's homes. So you know they had to get out of there. But the majority may became half of that if you just use that as an example. And, some stayed, some got on, you know, when the servicemen came, well, I should give them their credit, the soldiers. When they came in the big boats, if you wanted to go, they took you there and took you to the school. Like, you know, it was one of the schools that you could go to if you wanted to, but my aunt at that particular time didn't want to go anywhere. So one of my cousins and I just stayed there with her. But I was actually frightened, but I stayed there with her because she was a good 80, I'm gonna say 80-some years old.

Butta: So her house was okay through that or-

McCready: No not really.

Butta: -did she have damages?

McCready: Yeah, she had damages and whatever, yeah.

Cohen: Now, how did, from your perspective, the community respond after all of this?

McCready: Well, they had meetings later when- when the water subsided and you could come out. I'm gonna say I can't even recall how many days, but I'm going to give it a good three, four days, because people were calling their insurance companies and whatever, you know. What was your question again?

Cohen: How did the community respond?

McCready: Well, they came together. We came- we- they had meetings at various churches and the schools, trying to let some of us know that you could either get grants to fix your home or contact your insurance company and they could help you in some kind of way. It was, they tried to give us a wealth of resources that we could use and then I think they had some kind of- I don't know if it was a grant or whatever. I'm not sure and then they start interviewing quite a few of us, you know, of our experiences. But, depending on your income, some people were eligible for their home to be repaired and some weren't. And I was the one who's- what didn't fit into the standard. They said that my income was too high, and I didn't even fit in the level of getting my home repaired.

Cohen: So what did you do?

McCready: Just went on and rented a place for a while and came back to my home every now and then just to keep it just up enough to survive. Yeah. Because, but I have to admit, you had a few of the Mennonites and some of the churches that came out and tried to help you. You know,

we had quite a few churches that tried to us, as I think back and recall. And a few other companies, they would come and try to either help you fix your roof or your floor, but it was more like patchwork, you know. But they did the best they could. I appreciated it at the time, you know.

Butta: Now, speaking more broadly about flooding here, have you noticed changes in the land, weather, and water here in Crisfield? And if so, how have those changes kind of affected your-life here?

McCready: Now when you say changes, the only changes I can see is it appears as if, first of all on the map, we're way below sea level. And, secondly, some of our homes still have the effect of the flow of the water where it either warped your floor or whatever. If it didn't come completely in your house, like I said, as high as that may be, for example, it warped you floors, you know.

Butta: So do you think that the amount of flooding that you've gotten since moved here, do you think it stayed the same? Or do you think that you're experiencing more flooding?

McCready: I'm going to say almost the same, you know, depending on where your home is. Now I'm further up, so I didn't- I don't get the brunt of it as much as some of the people down here on Main Street and 4th Street. Like I said, from the gas station on, it's a gas station, Shore? Shore-whatever. From the gas station on, I have to admit, the people here, they have to take their cars up earlier, they'll tell you take your car up to McDonald's or they're trying to say a higher level. And then they just come back home. I don't know, because usually sometimes you can't get down here. Like if I'm trying to reach my niece, I have to meet her midway. So we put our boots on and we just slushed on through it.

Butta: And you've been doing that since you moved here in 2011?

McCready: Yes, off and on depending on the weather and how the tide comes up because it varies. It's usually a hard rain sometimes, you know, but it depends on the tide itself and I mean you see it actually coming, you know, over the road, you actually see it coming.

Cohen: So what are some other things that you personally do to prepare for flooding other than bringing your- your car up to higher ground?

McCready: Get your boots and either deal with it and bail it on out and try to survive the best way you can in it, because there's nowhere else to go. And if you are, you're going miles away out of your way from your home. Because it's not everywhere, but it's enough. It's- it's down here. You're leaving your home.

Butta: And do-

McCready: But.

Butta: -you see. I'm sorry, go ahead.

McCready: It's just where you're just back forth, back forth, and always fixing or whatever. And if you don't have the top-notch insurance, you're basically in trouble, you know, where they would fix things immediately or whatever. But we're a flood plain, so they want you to buy flood insurance, but still they don't break their neck when it's time to still do what they have to do. They may give you whatever you qualify for something like, you know how when we have a little accident with our car, the car insurance give you whatever fits that particular level, you know, enough to get you back on your feet again?

Butta: Now, before expected flood events, do you see the city preparing in any way for the like, larger storm events that are seen as like happening?

McCready: Well, they try- they try to do what they can with what they have. If you mean like putting the little sandbags out and the various trucks that they would have that's available. But other than that, I don't see too much. I don't.

Butta: Is there, like your local weather channel, would you say that they give you, like, pretty good warnings?

McCready: Yeah, they give you, I got to admit it, they try to give you the best warnings they can, but what they give you still, it'll- it- it- it still doesn't tap what occurs, you know, when that flood comes. They still don't give you a whole brunt of it, of what to expect, I don't think. But they give what they have based on their statistics and standards, so, you know, and the information that they've gathered, I guess. You know, it's like you give the best that you have for what you can do.

Cohen: Now-

McCready: You know how some people say that's out of my pay grade, so I'll say it like that. You know, those that's doing what they're doing are doing what they doing the best that they can.

Cohen: Now, do you feel that climate change is something that people in Crisfield actively discuss and plan for?

McCready: Certain ones of us, the rest of them not even thinking about it. Only a certain small group of us maybe. And if they are discussing it, you know how some people discuss whatever among themselves, like politics and whatever, and then when you come in, everything's shut down. But basically, no. And they may be thinking about it, because some of them have been here for years. Because the oldest one I know is my aunt, but she lives further up. And she's 92, and there's another lady over here, Ms. Maude. She's older too. They're about the last of the seniors here to have seen everything. So if you really want a story, they're good. They can tell you real stuff.

Cohen: After this we'd love if you could give us their information-.

McCready: Okay.

Cohen: -so we could reach out.

McCready: Yeah. And if they don't mind, I'll get it from them first. Now, my aunt probably would, and I would share it with her.

Butta: So what groups would you say are talking about climate change? [pauses]

McCready: I would say our church groups and our working people, depending on what you call working people. But I know church people. Quite a few college. People that have been in college. Now the younger group, I don't know. They would fit on y'all level, because you know, some things y'all just keep amongst whatever, so I don't, I can't say. But I know the few in my family, they'll share a few things and then some, it's like hushed. But I think they're thinking about it and their mindset is there. They just may not share it with us, with us being older. You know how sometime when you're older, the kids think you don't really understand and you haven't been there, so. But they're good kids and whatever but they share what they want to share, so I can't speak on that, but basically I would say even the people that work in some of the crab houses and whatever, they may not come out and do the big hoopty-doo, but they would be concerned. Because see, they weathered that storm. They've worked in those conditions that I hadn't even experienced. Some, I can't even fathom what they went through, because even my family, it's way back in the 50s and 60s. They went through a lot so the flood was like nothing to them. It was almost as if they were just- just went on and walked through it, not even knowing the dangers of what could be in the water. I don't even think they thought of it, just put their boots on or whatever they had or whatever rain gear, if that, and just went on for years.

Butta: Now you mentioned your- your church community. What church are you a part of, and?

McCready: Highway Holiness, it's right up on the highway. That's my aunt's church, the one I told you. She's 92.

Butta: And you would say that community is pretty important to you?

McCready: Yes. And you have nice communities down here. We have meetings at the various churches, certain ones of us get together, so I would say up to the church group, you know, and some of the teachers, you know, that's affiliated with the families. So you get your church groups, as far as I can say, and- and your regular, everyday working person.

Butta: So for the people that you'd say aren't really discussing climate change, do you think there's any reasons as to why they're apprehensive on having those discussions?

McCready: I think some just don't want to share, and they think it's none of your business, if you're not going to help them. If you want me to be honest, I think they feel if you're not going to do anything, why should I share with you what I'm experiencing and I have to live through it. That's my mindset of what they're thinking. Me? I would try to reach out for any resource I could that I felt could help me and would speak up, but I can't speak for other people. But I just think that's what some of them think. They've been going through it so long, what are you going to do? So why are you getting in their business? Because you have a few that would be able to get more information than me, which I said they would call me a come-here. Come-here is when you haven't been here all your life. So come-here is almost really like an insult, really. That's what it's supposed to be. But it doesn't bother me. But it's supposed to be an insult as if you're bringing whatever you have and it's disrupting, you know, whatever little culture they may have here, you know. Not that it's good or bad but it's like you're a little interruption and you wouldn't understand. And I may not because I didn't experience it every most of my life like they did. Mine was a small portion and like I said when the Sandy storm came in 2011 and I was afraid just them few days, yup. And I end up from my aunt's house, in the projects I walked from here to my house and the water was up to your waist, but I wanted to get home to see how my house looked. But it was actually up to your waist, walking. And then they said something on the news about, it's not good to really be in that water, once- once they said "snakes, that was it for me. When they said snakes, I was done. Because I didn't even, I didn't even think of whatever was in the water. I just was trying to get home. And I tried to do the shortcut from my aunt's house because she lived in the projects, Somers Cove projects.

Cohen: And now we're going back a little bit here, but have you participated in any community events surrounding the issue of flooding?

McCready: Of planning?

Cohen: Community events.

McCready: Only like the NAACP that they have here, and if they have any meetings that I'm aware of. But I'll participate in anything if they have it, if it's worthwhile.

Butta: So you haven't heard of any?

McCready: Mm-mm, I haven't. Now, it may be some that they're having in the churches and whatever, but I haven't heard of it, and if I did want to find out, I would have to contact either the mayor or whatever or go to what they call their little city hall down here and just inquire. But every now and then they'll have meetings at their little city hall on Main Street. And they share whatever information they want to share. How far it goes, I don't know. Because they're kind of a little whatever. Sometimes I feel that's already prepared and set before we even get in there. It's like they have all the answers, all the whatever. When they come close to meeting out, how much you can talk about what you can say. And some people would work in here. You know, they

don't want to say for so much because them same people they're talking to, maybe their boss or whatever is someone who signs their check. I'm just saying. I mean, it may not be, but I'm just saying that's a possibility. But anything that goes on, I like participating in, especially if it's to help somebody or make things better. I want to be a part of it, or I would like to be a part of it.

Butta: So are you aware of any projects that have happened that were to help the flooding issue here, like any infrastructure changes?

McCready: See, I don't know about infrastructure because I'm not that educated on infrastructure. But if you mean it by building up some of the land and- and fixing some of the people's homes, yes. But that was some people, everybody didn't get their home fixed up. Everybody didn't get, how do you call it, what would I call it? Where some people were relocated until their home got fixed and then they came back and they were subsidized for that. But that was because of their income. If you were somebody who worked and you made a few dollars on your check, she may be eligible for it, but you weren't. And then I didn't know if they dealt with how many cars was in your yard. But then you would look at some, three, four cars in the home, and they rebuilt theirs. But I heard they received vouchers and stipends to be away a while, while they redid their homes, because they had to actually gut out the homes. I mean, new floors, new whatever.

Butta: So you're speaking of like people that own homes?

McCready: Yes.

Butta: So, for those that rent here, what is like were those homes raised if you know or what is the process like?

McCready: Yeah, it'll, some of them were raised, yes, but you know what? I don't know if it was homeowners or what, but a few, if they fitted in a certain age range or income level, their homes were rebuilt. I mean, decks and what you call it when you have the thing you walk out on, like if you have a senior in your home.

Cohen: Porch?

McCready: Not porch, the whole thing that comes out. That I can't even think of the name.

Cohen: A ramp.

McCready: Ramp. Yeah, a ramp. Some had ramps and whatever. And the home was built up, if you mean that infrastructure, levels a little higher than it would have been, because it had to fit a standard in case the flood came again. But at least they had to be at a certain level, so many feet up off the ground, because if you look, some homes are flat on the ground, I mean, like your

summer home would be, or something we put in our yard for the kids. Not to be facetious, I'm just saying, you know, yeah.

Cohen: Now, have you known people who have decided to move away from Crisfield because of the flooding?

McCready: Yes.

Cohen: And-

McCready: To me, this is a ghost town now. All the stores and the movies and everything they used to have is gone. I mean, my aunt could be able to tell you about a skating rink, two, three movies. I mean, this used to be the crab-hoppin' town. Yes. From the history I've heard and like I said I'm gonna come here. So, they said this was, this was a happening town and I remember it when my mom would bring us down here every summer. I mean everything was like live going on. I mean, I would say a mini-Las Vegas. Back in time.

Butta: And, do you think there's any like specific reason as to why the like sort of liveliness that you were talking about kind of died down?

McCready: I don't think they wanted to let new people come in and bring businesses in. I don't think. There's that bias again. I think the older people that have had it all their lives, just like people that had old money, and, like I said, it depend on your family name and whatever, they're holding on and that's it, and this is what has turned into, a ghost town, as far I'm concerned. To me if I wasn't- was not retired, I would not be here. I wouldn't be here working every day, you know. Some of my cousins did it and did fine, but not me. I went to Philly where I wanted to make a few dollars and come back if I needed to. And it wasn't easy. Teaching in the Philadelphia school system was not easy, but I loved it. And that was my job, and I did it to the best of my ability. But here, they don't want no real people coming here, opening new business and whatever. So when you say infrastructure, do you mean the building up of the land or the homes or and- and all the environment around it? Is that what you mean?

Butta: Yes, yes.

McCready: That could- that could bring people in and you grow food and you- you really prosper? Girl, they don't want that here.

Butta: Do you see yourself staying in Crisfield?

McCready: Only because I'm retired, yes. But I may not stay long. Every now and then I think of just picking up and going, but I have land and property here. So that's what really keeps me here. [pauses] And like I said, only because I'm retired, this couldn't be an everyday thing for me trying to survive and get kids through school or preparing them for college or whatever. Even

though you have families here that are doing very well, I'm going to a banquet on Saturday, and we're honoring various students who have done well in school. They're getting scholarships and whatever on Saturday. So anything that they have, I'll try to participate in. And it's a nice program down there that the mayor has. I can't think of the name of it right now. And she's a good person you could talk to, the mayor.

Butta: We did talk to them.

McCready: She's good. Oh, so you've been down to the Village?

Butta: Yes.

McCready: There you go. So y'all have been to the best place. Yes, the Village. They are all awesome. Now she's done some work. She's a person to know and to be affiliated, yes.

Butta: So do you think that younger generations are less likely or more likely to stay in Crisfield if?

McCready: I think they're less likely. I don't think the average one would want to come back, and if they came back, it's similar to me, because family's here or whatever, but to visit. And if they came back, they prefer their family to go with them, but some of them are so, what is it when you're so embedded in what you've done so long, it's like you don't know anything else, You can take them away for a while, but then they want to go back home.

Cohen: They've put down such deep roots.

McCready: Maybe so and even though they're older, if the family really doesn't die out or whatever, they're not trying to leave. They're just here, and I can kind of understand it is their history, you know, yeah, the staunch roots. [pauses]

Butta: And kind of moving back to when you were talking about lifting the homes-

McCready: Elevating them, yes.

Butta: Yes. Do you think that is like the best way to kind of prevent homes from being damaged by the flooding?

McCready: No, I- I think elevating the homes is one of the things they could do that could help, but I think lifting the land and like you said the infrastructure what they need to level it up or they need you to shut everything down and let it be whatever it's going to be because that water, you- you can't control that water that's coming in, so what kind of engineers and experts did- do you need that could do that? I mean, can you fathom it, of- of them lifting everything to make it work? Cause right now I- I don't see it, but don't get me wrong. I believe it, because they can put

everything on your phone. They're going to the moon. They're doing everything else. They're going below sea level. So my thing is, why can't you work with what you already have too and build that up? Boy, does that sound crazy.

Cohen: I think, I- I believe there is a-, there's already been places in Crisfield that have, instead of building, raising the homes, they've actually built up the- the ground level. Yeah, but-

McCready: Where?

Cohen: And there's, do you remember?

Butta: I do remember.

Cohen: It was in the very beginning of semester.

Butta: We took a trip and just kind of scanned-.

McCready: Okay.

Butta: Around Crisfield. We did see one of the homes that they weren't raising the homes, they were raising the land in there, but I don't remember the location.

McCready: Okay

Cohen: The challenge with that, though, is that now all of that water that was going to be going to that home is now going down those hills and going to their neighbors' houses so if you don't raise everything-

McCready: That's-

Cohen: The people that can't afford-

McCready: that's what I was really trying to-

Cohen: Are then-

McCready: Yes.

Cohen: Getting the brunt of the damage-

McCready: Thank you, that's what I mean.

Cohen: So it makes it a big challenge.

McCready: So that's why I said could they bring engineers in to lift it all up, all of it, of what needs to be done. Yeah, like you said, that's that drain off from someone else coming to your house.

Cohen: Now do you think, this is a big question, do you think that it's worth it to spend the money to do that in Crisfield, or do you think that the people in Crisfield should go farther inland.

McCready: When you say further inland, what do you mean?

Cohen: I guess to higher-

McCready: Get out of Crisfield?

Cohen: To higher ground it would be-

McCready: But to higher ground where?

Cohen: Outside of Crisfield.

McCready: Some of them don't want to do that, because they know they want them out of here. And some of them, their heart is here. They know once they get out of here, that'll be it. Because they know that's their main purpose, to get them out of here, especially some of those in the projects and the low-income homes. They may not say, and they're the ones that really, really will not talk to you, because they know what you're really trying to do. You're trying to get them on out of here and take them to upper ground, and then leave them wherever they're going that they probably can't afford, because they just can't handle what they're doing here. If you want my honest opinion, even though some of them wouldn't say it, but they're thinking it. You're trying to get me out of there, and I'm just surviving here, and some of, some of the know nothing but this life. And it's all right if- if they can survive through it. I feel leave them alone. But I think they want to push them out and make this actually, what do you call it? A resort town. That's what they really want.

Butta: Do you think that their voices are being heard from the city?

McCready: No, because some are not going to talk to you like I'm talking to you. They won't. The real, real ones that you probably would need to talk too that can really tell you from the ground up and the real, in a nutshell, what's going on are the ones that probably wouldn't talk to you, only a few. And they'll either just walk away from you or be polite or something, but they're not going to say anything to you to tell you what they really feeling, because it's families that's been here for years. Like I said, my aunt's 92. She can tell you a little bit of everything and she's in a right mind, moves around whatever, you know.

Cohen: Now, what do you think could make Crisfield better? If you were in charge, if the city, state, county were listening to you, what would you do?

McCready: Bring whatever businesses in that want to come in and have the money. And- and the way for all and the cultural experiences pulling everybody in. No one group because you have money even if it's a small group but they can handle whatever over here or a group here. Pull everybody in, all resources, and make it work for everybody, not because you're the multi-millionaire and you have whatever or like I said you have that so-called special-ass name that runs all through the town. Help everybody. Make it where everybody can be a fisher of themselves. Not where you're just helping them. Some of them don't want you giving them. They want you to make a way so they can make a way for themselves, so they can feel better and make their families feel better. Cause some people may not have a lot, but they love their families. They're doing the best they can. And they have to be, to me, for them to be here with some of this low-income jobs they have. Not to be smart or down on them, but come on. Some of them jobs I wouldn't have taken. To raise a family, have a car, I mean, you want to send them to school? Just because you're poor don't mean you don't think in a certain parameter. And it depends on what you call poor, because to me, poor is a state of mind. It's how you think about yourself and what you have. Cause all you can work with is what you have. Yeah, they can build this up, but you got to bring people in. But they don't want people in. Oh, you got to do it around the town and see. Some of them in the cars, they drive a little truck they have, trying to intimidate you with certain signs. They don't know they don't mean a thing to us, because if we get on our nerves enough, we'll ride it right on down and go to court, pay whatever the fees is, and keep it moving. Because some of them are ridiculous. They have that old-time prejudice in them and racism that they think you don't see. And it's just there. Some of it, it make you not cannot even speak to them. You just act like they're not there. Cause they're not open for anything new. If they open this place up like they should, it can get back on the ground again. But help start with the housing and the homes and definitely the jobs. Pay these people. They're working and they're hard workers, most of them. Pay them. You'd want somebody to pay you. My thing is if they switch positions, you'd want someone to pay for what you're working for or give you something. There's no more free schooling, right? Oh, pay for my books, my phone, whatever. That would make you want to stay. Otherwise, why would you invest in something that you're getting nothing out of?

Cohen: I truly hope that's what the future of Crisfield looks like.

McCready: Yes, just let new people come in with their new ideas, their educational and engineering experiences, and a variety. Let them bring in the wealth and a plethora of things that can make this town get back on its feet again, and not just for one group, everybody. It's a whole lot of, if I'm saying it right, Mexicans here. God knows them people work. I don't care what other people say about them. When I see them, they're working and they don't take all day to fix your home. If they say your home's going to be fixed in a week or whatever, it may be 10 or 15 of

them, but it gets done. When they go for their break, they really go for their break. They're half an hour break, not over, not coming back later, not whatever. They sit right in the parameters of what they need to do. Maybe a hundred of them in one home, but they're surviving. So my thing is use what you have. You're always supposed to use the resources that you have, but just bring all cultures, all those that want to partake and do something. Why not? Why keep it all to yourself? Why not share it if they're willing to invest in building it up, you know? Because have you been to Gordon's, the place down there, for a hundred?

McCready: Yeah, a few people from our group has been down there.

McCready: How was it, for real. Did they talk to you?

McCready: I don't think they had success in getting, because they were trying to recruit people for like an interview that we're doing now, and I don't think they had any success with...

Cohen: I think they dropped off some flyers, but it wasn't jumping at it.

McCready: And if anything, they should. They've been here a hundred years.

Cohen: Love to hear their stories. Thank you.

McCready: Thank you, wouldn't you? Yes, even though I know the older ones are basically gone, but it's some in there that could share whatever, but that's why I said, did you go there? That's almost like the heart of the town right now.

Cohen: I'd love to go back.

McCready: And you could get a [inaudible]. You can try it. You go. They show it when they find me. I'm sure. But try it again. And maybe if you get one of the younger ones outside by themselves, not in there where the big bosses are. Because if you know, if you're go in, there's always some sitting, staggering. If you could get some of those that's behind working the fryer, I call it the little people. Yeah. And when I say little people, I don't mean it in a demeaning way. I mean the real workers. I think they would have something to say. And have you been to the hospital, the McCready Hospital? Have you been over there, just [inaudible—speaking in almost a complete whisper].

Butta: No, I don't think we've been to the hospital.

Butta: Okay, so try the hospital, and the old folks homeless to the side, and try to think where else you can go to get information—and try some of the churches. Some of us talk too much.

Butta: Yeah, we- we spoke to a- a lot of people at the Shiloh United Methodist Church.

McCready: Now did they speak pretty? That's what I'm part of. A lot of people from there. Yes. Yeah, we talk to them. They're part of my group, too. We the ones that talk. But it's a small group, see? That's what I mean. And did you try the other churches? It's Shiloh and then the other church on Main Street? I think it's Main Street. It's only two churches right here, and then it's another one if you go down that way. It's another church just before you go down 4th Street. You'll see it, see some stuff in a little corner, and you'd go buy it, but it's a church.

Cohen: Writing that down.

McCready: Mm-hmm. Did you go to the crab place here? Right there, where the yellow building is. You can get a wealth of information from there if they talk to you. Because that's the way the cruises, they had the cruisers and the crab, the big crab thing every year.

Cohen: I think we tried to go there, but they were closed the time that we came, but going there again.

McCready: But try them again. Certain days they are closed. If you see quite a few trucks out there, somebody's in there. Now I don't know if they way in the back and the freezer part, whatever, I don't know that part and try some. Did you try any of the funeral homes? The funeral houses.

Cohen: I wish these interviews were going on longer so we can get everyone's voices.

McCready: I was trying to give you as much as I could. Yeah, some of the funeral homes, because most of them been here for years. Definitely put down Anthony's Funeral Home. Anthony Ward. I think he'll talk to you. He has one here, but he also has one in Princess Anne. And just pull up Anthony Ward Funeral Home. That's a wealth. But then most of us are the church group, too, but try him. I'm trying to think. Did you talk to the library people here out? Because, you know, they just built this. Or they shut down. Did they call the library? Because especially if you can catch them young ones, try to catch them outside, because I don't know if they'll talk in here. You see what I'm saying? Some will want to talk to you, but they don't want to talk in here based on their job, I think sometimes. Some of them young, yeah, try them young. But that lady that you met when you came in, try her. She has a wealth of information she can share. Because one day we were just talking about the schools and how the kids act and whatever, and she had a lot to say. But I don't if she'll say it, in here with y'all.

Butta: Kind of circling back to like our last few questions that we have on the sheet. Would you recommend Crisfield as a place to live?

McCready: Yeah, I still would recommend it, but like I told my friends, I prefer to meet you halfway because once you get here, it's the end of the road. It's not too much. You- you can get pizza over there, a few dollar stores, but when they come, we basically go to the Ocean City area

or up near Delaware, I have to be honest. I don't bring them all the way down here unless I'm just introducing them to my family. Because I feel this is the cutoff and some people actually call this the end of the world. Have you been down to the wharf? Okay, some actually call it the end of the world. So with my them city slicker friends of mine, I don't want to bring them down here where I gotta knock them out, because I say I told you it was not too much to do. You have to make it whatever. Me, I'm content and happy here, because I make my day whatever it is. It doesn't bother me, and when the tide comes up, I get my boots and do whatever and go on, or if not, I can get in my car and I get out of here for a day or two, you know, if it really bothers me, but it doesn't bother me that much. Only when that water really, really comes up. Have y'all ever seen it? The water. When you get a chance, pull up 2011 Sandy storm and you'll see our trucks and it did everything but float. Some of the lids came off the graves. [inaudible—whispering] The tops came off the graves, the grave. Right across from the school, Crisfield High. And I know because I was walking. That was during the Sandy. If you pull up the Sandy, you'll see a lot of history that you wouldn't even have to ask people that we lived through, and we lived through that a while. That just wasn't a day because I told you after two or three days, I bailed the water out my car, but it- she wouldn't turn on, and I had to walk from my aunt's house, which is in the projects, to my home, which is up on Franklin, a little bit above the McDonald's. And my home still needs a lot of work. [Hurricane Sandy was in 2012]

Butta: Kind of circling back again-

McCready: Okay.

Butta: -Other than Sandy, were there any other major storm events that you remember pretty vividly?

McCready: Only the Sandy that I'm aware of with coming back here. And then every now and then when the tide comes up maybe every other month, the tide will come up where you can't come out your back door or whatever but basically down here, so it's frequent enough. You know or if the tide's coming up or a certain rain, they tell people it's time for you to get out of town if you live out- if you don't live here in Crisfield. They'll tell them going to Pocomoke, Salisbury, where you going, because otherwise you'll be stuck here. You know, someone would have to come get you, you'd have to leave your car and walk to your friends that's going to pick you up. That's why I said at least- at least the McDonald's level was as far as I could go. And the last level to try to meet my cousin was one of the gas stations, by- by, I think it's a PNC Bank. That's as far as I could go that day, and she had to meet me the rest of the way. Otherwise, you see people in their boats and whatever, and the guys with their big trucks [imitates truck engine], you know, trucks going through. Yeah.

Butta: I think we're on our last question. Paige, do you have any other questions that you want to ask?

Cohen: No, it's just the last one, which is what wisdom would you share for future generations?
[pauses]

McCready: Give back as much as you can to those that helped you, and especially the shoulders that you were on to get you where you are today, wherever they may be, whatever job. But reach back and just try to help someone or give whatever, either your time, or your money, whatever. But reach back and help someone, because someone helped you. And I call it being on the shoulders of our elders that lifted us and lifted us up. Just- just give something back of what made you the person that you are.

Cohen: Thank you so much. Are there any final thoughts before we conclude the interview?

McCready: No, I just didn't know if I answered your questions effectively.

Butta: Oh, no.

Cohen: You absolutely did.

McCready: Really?

Butta: Yes, yes, absolutely.

McCready: Okay.

Cohen: Well, thank you very much.

[Transcript ends]